

Committee on Aging Public Hearing

February 25, 2014

Testimony in SUPPORT of bill No. 5224

Submitted by: Sidnee Streater, Southern Connecticut State University BSW student

Good morning members of the Aging Committee. I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts. My name is Sidnee Streater. I am an undergraduate student at Southern Connecticut State University studying to get a bachelor's in Social Work. I am an intern at a Therapeutic Foster Care Program in New Haven. Today I would like to show support for bill No. 5224.

According to statistics, in September of 2012, approximately 399,546 children were in foster care in the United States. More than a quarter of those children stayed in relative homes. I am working with a client at my agency that recently lost a potential placement due to a lack of family assistance. My client and his brother came into care after their mother attempted to overdose on her psychiatric medicine. There were no reliable resources for the boys. DCF finally got a response from the brothers' paternal grandmother who lived in Texas. Unfortunately, the grandmother did not have the means to care for both boys. The grandmother agreed to take her grandson but could not afford to care for my client. If the department followed through with this plan, the boys would never see each other again. The boys will have difficulty dealing with grief and loss. Future deterrents could be avoided if the state provided assistance for kinship placements. Grandparents and other relatives should receive equal to what foster parents receive when they become the primary caregiver of a child.

State and local child welfare systems are obligated by law to provide money to foster parents to cover the basic needs of child. Why should this be any different for kinship ties? Are family members obligated to care for their relatives? Oppositionist may argue that relatives are responsible for caring for family members and they should not receive any compensation. Oppositionist claim that families should care for their own out of the goodness of their heart. With the majority of the aging population living on fixed incomes, it is impossible to provide proper care for a child. No kid should be rejected. There should be a law that provides family assistance to the elderly and other relatives to ensure that a child's basic needs are being met.

I am in support of bill No. 5224. I ask that you reflect on my client's story and vote this bill out of committee.

Thank you for your time,

Sidnee Streater